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HOW TO EXTEND THE USEFULNESS OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

A PLEA FOR UNIFORMITY,

BY

J. A. CHARLTON DEAS, F. R. Hist. S.,

Sub-Librarian, Newcastle-upon-Tyne Public Libraries.

Read at a Meeting of the Northern Counties Library
Association, at Bradford, 16th December, 1903.

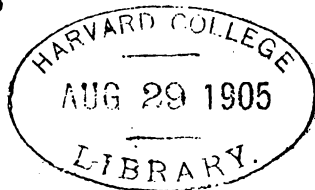
REVISED AND EXTENDED.

"In uniformity there is not simply utility, but economy."—*Bulkeley*.

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PREFACE.

If the publication of my plea for more uniformity of method and greater economy in the administration of British Public Libraries requires any excuse, let it be said that I publish it at the earnest request of several friends and of some Librarians whom I do not know personally.

Although virtually a reproduction of the address I had the privilege of delivering before the Northern Counties Library Association, at Bradford, in December, 1903, I have thought it advisable to incorporate in it certain facts and opinions which time prevented my adverting to on that occasion.

J. A. CHARLTON DEAS.

Newcastle-upon-Tyne Public Libraries.

1904.

HOW TO EXTEND THE USEFULNESS OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES.

BEFORE beginning to suggest how the usefulness of Public Libraries might be infinitely extended, it will be well to trace as briefly as may be, the genesis and growth of these institutions.

Public Libraries were established in England by the first Act of Mr. William Ewart in 1850, and at the end of 1901 numbered 430 (or including Branch Libraries, 664); these Libraries contained 6,528,000 volumes, with a circulation of over 40,000,000 annually.

When the first Libraries Act was being passed in England, America already possessed 550 Public Libraries. Some of course were only small, but in 1900 the number containing over 1,000 volumes each, had increased to 5,383: an aggregate total of 44,591,851 volumes.

We cannot be surprised that American Libraries should attain such pre-eminence, when we take into account, from the statistics of Mulhall, that in 1850, 84 per cent. of the United States adult population could write, against only 64 per cent. of our own; and that no rate-supported Schools existed here until twenty years later. It may be humbling to our national vanity that the mother country should learn from her precocious children; but that is no reason why the lessons of a longer experience and a wider practice should not be attentively studied.

The United States possesses a unique literature on Library methods and practice. Organization and business system, the weak points in British, are the strength of American Libraries. In American Libraries their methods of classification, their superior apparatus, and their administrative systems of management, leave the average British Library far behind in the race for efficiency. Many of our Libraries still cling to the primitiveness of fifty years ago. Some Librarians object to codifying methods of administration, on the ground that such prevents expansion.

Mr. J. D. Brown in the preface of his recent admirable "Manual of Library Economy," says, "When methods are run on codified lines, there is always a danger of everything becoming fixed." But is it always detrimental where methods become fixed, and, if such is the case to a certain extent, is such uniformity not to be preferred to the irregularity of the present methods? After fifty years of existence, no particular business, or educational institution in Great Britain has made slower progress in systematic and scientific uniformity of administration than Public Libraries.

Rules and Regulations.

When Libraries are under the same Acts, why need the rules vary so much in one town from another, both in purport and number? A greater uniformity in the direction of fewer rules and simpler regulations, would reduce embarrassment to readers passing to the Public Library of another town. Some towns seem to have rules in inverse ratio to the stock. Thus one Library, proud in the possession of 1,200 volumes, has 32 rules, whilst Liverpool with 218,000 volumes, has only 12; Aberdeen has 47; Battersea 33; Birmingham 29; Bolton 16; Bradford 35; Edinburgh 27; Leeds 28; Manchester 16; Newcastle-upon-Tyne 26; Portsmouth 40; Preston 13; Sheffield 16; York 27. The average number of rules in British Libraries is 32, whilst the average in America is under 20. It is therefore apparent that some of these Libraries must either be ruled too much or ruled too little, it surely cannot be that the dispositions of the people in our small islands vary to such an extent. Too many regulations tend to repel rather than to attract readers. At the same time be it remembered that the number of rules possessed by a Library, is no criterion as to the severity with which the institution is managed. Some Libraries with only a small number of rules, include two or three which seem to have been framed with the intention of ruling the reader with a rod of iron. It also frequently happens that Libraries possess two or three rules which are positively illegal. Fewer and more considerate rules would be of great advantage in many Libraries. Much may always be left to the discretionary powers of the Librarian.

The Library is generally a maze to those who visit it for the first time, and few things are more unpleasant than a feeling of absolute helplessness. Even Librarians feel this in the British Museum or the Bibliothèque Nationale, although their rules are simple, when known. Therefore, as first impressions are often lasting, instead of being met, or having to become acquainted with the many "keep-off-the-grass" notices, the diffident reader should be impressed with the spirit of kindly interest and desire to help him, which the staff undoubtedly feels. Well-educated people are often unable to give their literary wants a proper name, and after spending much time in searching for books which they fail to find—often make a hurried departure with a feeling of disappointment and anger against the Library. If this occurs with educated persons, what must be the case with the less cultured? Retiring, poor and illiterate readers generally hesitate to make known their wants as they feel that in doing so they are exhibiting a lack of intelligence and giving more trouble than they are entitled to give. This is particularly so in Reference Libraries.

Reference Department Rules.

Long observation of various Reference Libraries convinces one that many readers are continually drifting in and out without venturing to bring their exact requirements to the notice of the assistants. Again, with the exception of an odd junior, the qualified assistants are generally found to be working behind bookcases, broad counters, or barriers, and as they almost invariably wear that solemn and serious air so peculiar to Librarians, this apparent exclusiveness repels those enquiries which it is their province to answer. Granted that the carefully isolated assistant is doing important work, is the reader not of first importance? Unless we can attract readers, our work fails to be of consequence and is to a certain extent useless. Elaborate catalogues can never take the place of educated, resourceful, and obliging assistants, which is tantamount to saying that less money should be spent on machinery and more on brains.

In some Reference Libraries the issues are immeasurably affected by the presence or absence of certain assistants. An assistant should be quick to recognise his limitations, so that a question beyond his knowledge might be handed on to one who may be better acquainted with that particular subject. There should always be an utter lack of the perfunctory spirit, as the value of the services rendered, is due to the manner as well as the matter. The interest with which the enquiry is taken up should put the timid reader at his ease. If "books are friends that fail not," then great should be the pleasure derived when possessing the power of introduction.

Art Galleries and Art Books.

Where Public Art Galleries and Libraries adjoin each other, much mutual assistance can be secured by shelving the art books of the Reference Department in, or at least within easy reach of, the Art Gallery, where they can be consulted in conjunction with the art treasures. By these means, valuable assistance is not only rendered to art lovers, but an increased circulation is secured for the Library art works. Many valuable and beautiful art works in Reference Libraries are rarely consulted, owing to limited facilities for calling the attention of the class of people to whom the works are of most service.

Splendid results are secured in the few towns where access to the art books is to be had in the Art Gallery. The system is one which can be worked even where the two institutions are under quite separate administration.

Centralisation in Classifying and Cataloguing.

A considerable amount of work and the consequent expenses might be reduced by centralisation in classifying and cataloguing. When we think of the hundreds of Librarians cataloguing, and in some cases the same books being classified, hundreds of times in the year,—certainly not always on the same principles—would it not be an universal and incalculable advantage to have most of this work done at one common centre, and the results sent round in circular form weekly? In America they are extensively adopting the system of co-operation in the cataloguing and classifying of recent books, and this promises to be most successful. In Norway the advantages of co-operation are fully recognised.

In writing on the subject, Mr. Nyhuus, the Librarian of Christiania says, "We have made an attempt toward library co-operation, printed cards and separate catalogues printed from the type of the main catalogue. By acting as one body the 650 small libraries of Norway have obtained special rates from nearly all publishers. We are working for one cataloguing system, one classification, uniformity all over, in order to make the most out of our very limited means."

Such co-operation for uniformity here, would enable a reader to know exactly how to use any Library. Fully three quarters of the Public Libraries of the United Kingdom are in a state of chaos for the want of a good scientific classification and a more, if not an entirely, uniform system of cataloguing. Most of the catalogues issued in a year represent nearly as many different systems of classification and cataloguing as there are in existence. The number of classes used in the Libraries which are classified, vary in number from 5 to 17, in many of which, books are arranged in the accidental order of addition. The following table shows the disparity existing between a few of the important Libraries:—

Aberdeen	has 10 classes in the Reference Department and 15 in the Lendg.								
Battersea	" 10	"	"	"	"	"	"	9	"
Birmingham	" 7	"	"	"	"	"	"	12	"
Bolton	" 13	"	"	"	"	"	"	13	"
Bradford	" 6	"	"	"	"	"	"	6	"
Edinburgh	" 10	"	"	"	"	"	"	9	"
Leeds	" 12	"	"	"	"	"	"	11	"
Liverpool	" 14	"	"	"	"	"	"	16	"
Manchester	" 10	"	"	"	"	"	"	10	"
Newcastle-									
upon-Tyne	" 10	"	"	"	"	"	"	11	"
Portsmouth	" 9	"	"	"	"	"	"	12	"
Preston	" 7	"	"	"	"	"	"	7	"
Sheffield	" 7	"	"	"	"	"	"	7	"
York	" 9	"	"	"	"	"	"	8	"

Out of 287 libraries reporting recently, 34 had a proper scientific classification, but this only in 16 cases was applicable

to the Lending Department; of the others, 12 had close classification for both Lending and Reference, and there were therefore 253 unclassified in the true sense. Among the advantages to be gained by uniformity of classification, would be that of equal comparison of the classes of Library stocks and Library issues. Many Libraries do better work and have a larger genuine circulation than Libraries which—according to the figures published in their reports—have twice the issue. This paradox is brought about by the craving for “big circulations,” which some authorities have, and to attain which, current periodicals are issued from the Reference counter, each being recorded as a genuine book issue. It is an objectionable feature of some Reference Libraries that fiction may be read in that department *ad libitum*, and in such “Reference” Libraries the issue of 8,000 to 10,000 works of fiction per annum is not unusual. Before such sky-scraping issues of elevating literature, the genuine Reference Library must pale its ineffectual light. At the present time, equal or fair comparison of Libraries is absolutely impossible.

If a Government report were called for to-morrow from the British Libraries, shewing the number of books possessed in the different divisions of literature, and the number of books issued in each division, we could not honestly supply a table of sufficient uniformity to be of any effective national use. This from an institution of 50 years existence! Of the many systems of classification to choose from, the Dewey with its 20,000 divisions seems to be the best thought out, is the one most used in America, England, and the Continent, and therefore its numbers already have an international significance. The universal adoption of Dewey's ten-division system for Reference Libraries, and the same, with the addition of an eleventh or “fiction” division for Lending Libraries, would be an important step towards much needed unification. It is granted that even this much appreciated system has its shortcomings, but as Pope says, “whoever thinks a perfect work to see, thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor ere shall be.”

As British Libraries are independent of each other, are not under State control, and have therefore no headquarter reports to make, this may to some extent account for the lack of uniformity. It would have been well for Public Libraries, if the new Education Act had taken over their administration and control, as to the education department they certainly belong. It was only because there were no educational authorities in 1850, when the first Public Libraries Act was passed, that the administration of Libraries was placed in the hands of Town and District Councils—20 years before School Boards were established. The usefulness of Libraries would have been greatly extended by such centralisation and

unification, as under such a uniform control would have been absolutely necessary; and a great hindrance—the rate limitation—would also never have existed.

Rate Limitation.

Certainly 24 towns through special Acts have secured an increased rate; 8 have raised the limit to 1½d. in the £; 10 to 2d.; 1 to 4d., and 4 have abolished limitation altogether. But there ought to have been no need for special Acts! There is no more reason for Parliament to dictate how much communities may spend on Libraries, than on Workhouses, Baths, and Parks. No rate gives a greater return of benefits to the public. The beneficial influences of Public Libraries are widespread indeed—given proper administration. Even the man who never enters a Public Library, receives indirect but immeasurable benefits from them through the researches of the pressman, the journalist, and the historian. The information procured from our Libraries by these world's teachers is re-circulated to the farthest corners of the earth and absorbed perchance by men who are as indifferent to the usefulness of Public Libraries, as are the Swiss to the necessity of a navy. Stanley Jevons in his "Social Reform," writes, "There is probably no mode of expending Public money which gives a more extraordinary and immediate return in utility, than the establishment of Public Libraries."

Notwithstanding the burden of the rate limitation, another burden is added by the necessity of Libraries having to contribute their quota to the rates. Many of the 430 or so Public Libraries pay both rates and taxes, but some are exempt where the local assessor registers them as scientific societies. Four Libraries are charged for the collection of their rates; 43 pay local rates and income tax; 25 pay local rates only, and 25 only pay income tax. Some contend that in proportion to the production of the rate, the deduction is of no consequence, but apart from the principle, such is not the case. In a large Library the total amount is sufficient to make an indifferently represented section a strong one, or even to found a special collection, and in small places the remission of a few pounds in taxes is of such serious consideration, that it may mean the difference between adding something or almost nothing to the shelves. This is particularly important to many of the early institutions which were born with a load of debt, and remain so to the present day.

American Libraries are exempt from all taxes, and in point of fact often receive taxes from other sources. Many Libraries receive the Dog Tax and others the Police Court fines, but to have the prosperity of the Library in direct ratio to the wickedness of the people, is not desirable and may tend to degrade it in the eyes of the public.

As we are not at present under the wing of the Education Act, or of a separate State Department, we ought in the first place to get rid of the necessity of paying rates and taxes, and then the rate limitation, by influencing more generally the assessing authorities to a proper spirit of appreciating our work, and by securing the support of our local Parliamentary representatives for the next appeal before Parliament. Considerable assistance to the limited income of Libraries can be given by Town Councils, through omitting the charges for annual cleaning and painting, and gas and electric light—when the latter are owned by the town—and other general expenses. Such concessions are already made by several sympathetic authorities.

Dr. Carnegie and Library Debts.

Should the great Anglo-American benefactor, Dr. Carnegie—who is now nearing his 1,000th offer of Libraries—ever desire more worlds to conquer, he perhaps could not find a better than the Library world of early established Libraries. Many of these Libraries were born in debt, have existed in it, and owing to the great work to be done on a limited and often taxed income, are likely to continue fettered for the next 10, 15, or 20 years, so slowly can the obstacle be surmounted. To get rid of this hindrance to rapid expansion, would be one of the best means of extending the usefulness of the Public Libraries which struggled into existence under less favourable conditions than do those of to-day.

Technical Grants.

Mr. Edward Edwards suggested in his scheme in 1849, that Libraries should receive aid grants, in the same manner as elementary schools, but the suggestion never materialised, so—with the exception of the British Museum—Public Libraries remain local institutions. There can be no valid reason why Public Libraries should not receive aid for furthering the technical work from the new Education Boards. After an interval of 54 years we find Mr. Edwards' suggestion repeated by Viscount Goschen—when presiding at the Summer meeting of the University Extension Students, at Oxford in August last—he said, in discussing, "Free Libraries and Higher Education," "Under the new Act, I believe the Public Libraries might refer to the Secondary Education Committee, and perhaps receive grants for increasing books of reference, and I am sure the Education Committee could not spend money better than by such a grant!"

Facilities For Borrowing Books.

Greater facilities might be given to the reader in the Lending department, by lessening restrictions as to the tickets and the borrowing of books. The qualifications and security required from borrowers vary greatly in different towns. Out of 291 Libraries reporting recently, the conditions relating to ratepayers proper, were :—201 Libraries issued tickets to ratepayers without a guarantor ; 75 required one guarantor, and 15 required two guarantors. The conditions for non ratepayers were :—10 Libraries admitted non-ratepayers without a guarantor ; 241 required one guarantor, and 8 reported that they did not issue books to non-ratepayers. There is no uniform period of guarantorship. In some Libraries the voucher must be renewed annually, and in others the signature holds good for three, six and more years. A controlling head, or say the Library Association, could surely advise some initiatory arrangement superior to these irregular and spasmodic conditions. Considering the few books which are lost from Libraries, why should one ratepayer be guaranteed by another? When a resident non-ratepayer in a spirit of independence does not care to ask anyone to be his guarantor, he should be allowed—as in a few towns—to have a ticket issued on a small money security of about 5s. Again it frequently happens that a stranger in a town knows no one whom he can ask to be his guarantor. To such a man—to whom the Library would be a comfort and of use—books are debarred. In some Libraries, London particularly, regular workers in the district—but who are non-resident—are allowed to use the Libraries on the same conditions as residents. It is rightly contended that the employers are often the biggest ratepayers, and that employes should therefore reap the benefits of which the former rarely, if ever, take advantage. Such a condition should be easily and beneficially extended to Provincial Libraries. Some Libraries generously allow non-residents to have the privilege of borrowing, by payment of a small sum annually—equivalent to the average rateable value. Such charges vary from 2s. 6d. per house—as at Tynemouth—to 10s. 6d. per year.

Towns possessing Branch Libraries should invariably give the reader borrowing powers from the Central Library and not limit him to the Branch in the district in which he resides. Such a facility exists in some towns, but it should be general. To confine a borrower to the comparatively small stock of volumes in the district Branch is an arbitrary and a retrogressive policy. In some towns—Newcastle among them—a reader may obtain tickets for the Central and all the Branches and borrow from each simultaneously if he desires.

How to Add Borrowers.

Many borrowers might be added to the Libraries, if Committees would abolish the usual charge of 1d. for a voucher or form of membership. It is not that any reader will prefer his copper to a Library ticket, but the removal of the charge would permit the circulation of vouchers in clubs, debating classes, and other societies, and in this manner many persons would be drawn to use the Institution. In the Juvenile Library perhaps the 1d. is occasionally a consideration, and it is surprising that scarcely any of the Library enthusiasts who talk so much about catching and enrolling the toddlers, say anything on this point. It may seem a small detail, but its importance to some youngsters is great, and receives their serious consideration when a Library ticket is placed as an alternative to a packet of cigarettes or sweets.

Extra Tickets.

The extra ticket, or student's ticket as some call it, might be taken up more generally in Libraries. We all know there are many occasions when we require to work with two—and often more—books at one time. In the Libraries where the extra ticket is issued, it is of course only used for works other than fiction. This inducement to the perusal of solid books as well as fiction, was the idea of Mr. Macalister who originated it in 1893. Now nearly 100 Libraries are using these extra tickets which are also extensively used in American Libraries. In Philadelphia alone, 85 per cent. of the readers make use of them.

Securing Readers.

Having come into touch with our reader, how can we best hold him? Here again the remarks concerning the Reference Room in a great measure refer to the Lending Department. The Librarian's interest in his readers should be almost as much in evidence in the Lending as in the Reference Library, for as Mr. Peter Cowell, of Liverpool, says, "It is a mistake for any Librarian to think that it is he who should always be sought by the reader, and that it is unnecessary for him to seek them. The vigour and interest shown by the Chief Librarian, will be the measure of the vigour and interest of the staff, and thereby the measure of the success of the Public Library." It may also be contended that it is a mistake for Chief Librarians to confine themselves to work of secondary importance which lacks opportunities for their coming in contact with the readers daily. Readers hesitate

to ask advice in reading from Chief Librarians who are so often engaged with mechanical details which could well be left to subordinates. The human touch should be as present in the Public Library as in the British Museum, where not only the Superintendent of the Reading Room but at least one other of the Librarians are constantly on duty at the "Central Desk" to answer enquiries and to smooth away all difficulties with urbane cheerfulness worthy of the highest praise. These gentlemen surely do not occupy positions of less importance than the Public Librarian.

Indicators and Card-charging.

A frequent source of annoyance to the reader, is the indicator, the systems of which are many and various. Out of 161 Libraries reporting in 1900, 46 used ledgers, 34 card-charging systems, 81 indicators, and 11 indicators for fiction only; we have here three distinct systems, and since the indicator system exists in no less than 14 varieties, we cannot but admit the advantage of unification. It is doubtful whether the much vaunted indicators are real aids to readers. Their use, because they are time-savers to the Library staff, is after all, false economy, for in large Libraries the system eventually grows unwieldy. Many readers lose patience with indicators and their different systems of showing books "in" or "out." There is the necessity of having to cover a lot of ground, before finding the indicator required; in the gaining of which, the number sought is frequently forgotten. It is often due to the intricacies of such indicators that occasionally new borrowers from other towns, using a better system, are never seen after a second or third visit. Indicators usurp the place of the Library staff, whose aim should be to come more in contact with the public.

More readers, better results can be secured, and a great amount of the reader's time saved, by what is known as the card-charging system, which is equally suitable to large and to small Libraries. The system is simplicity itself, and where a borrower is unable to attend the Library personally—which frequently happens—no knowledge of the system is required in the strange messenger who may be sent. With an indicator system, no matter how simple, some knowledge—or explanation from an assistant—is necessary. As those who understand card-charging know, the presence or absence of a book is ascertained by the assistant, instead of the reader. This the assistant easily does, where a perfect system is used, by turning to a set of trays which stand in close proximity to the counter; there being no necessity to go to the shelves, or to some distant indicator for the information. If the indicator is used at all, it should only be for the issue of novels, as is done in

some Libraries. The large Libraries of Liverpool and Manchester are among those using the card-charging system, and almost all the American Libraries are so worked. The indicator has never made headway in the United States. It was experimented with for several years in Boston, but was discontinued in favour of the better system.

Fines.

The period for which books are lent out varies considerably in Libraries. In some towns only seven days are allowed and a fine of 1d. per diem is charged beyond that limit. Occasionally we find certain Libraries charging a fine on each volume, when a work happens to be issued in two or more volumes, but fortunately this reprehensible practice is rapidly being abolished. Most Libraries allow books to circulate 14 days, and only charge 1d. per week or part of a week, when overdue. Books of light reading should be allowed to circulate for 14 days, but other classes much longer. It is of little use for the Library to buy, or the borrower to borrow expensive technical, and other good class books, which are allowed out for so short a time. When the work is large or profound, the present limitation tends to unproductive skimming and to much unnecessary vexation to the reader.

Bespeaking Books.

The system of bespeaking books by paying for an advice post-card, is a commendable one, if limited to non-fictional works, and tends to economise the reader's time. The retention of a book for a reader should be limited to a few hours only, and if not called for in that time, placed in circulation again. In Bradford, no less than 2,000 advice cards are sold yearly to borrowers.

So great is the demand now for popular books, that the system often practised, of keeping returned books in the building over night, before re-issuing, should, wherever possible, be abolished, or where the staff is not sufficient to sort and shelve the books immediately they are returned, it would at least be better to allow them to circulate again in the evening. Although readers are informed by certain indicators that a returned book will be re-issued "to-morrow," yet a large number of readers—particularly the working classes—have not the facilities for securing the work when the Library opens, which is manifestly unfair. Thus works at all topical or popular, rarely reach the readers who cannot attend until the evening. As most books are exchanged in the evening, this is therefore the best time to allow them to re-circulate; that is to say where re-circulation is not allowed immediately on return.

Replacement of Books.

Many Librarians in their desire to increase their stock, overlook the great importance of promptly replacing worn and soiled books. More readers are driven from the Library by soiled books than are attracted to it by new additions, and once this occurs, it takes years of new management, or new practices, to regain the confidence of the scared reader. Many Librarians have learned this lesson only by experience !

Library Books and Infection.

Through such neglect, the old bogey, "infection," is again and again unearthed. Though Librarians do not as a rule enter into controversies in the public press, on this point they should practice the exception that proves the rule, in order to retain the public confidence, by explaining what so few seem to know ; namely, the elaborate precautions taken by the Library authorities and Medical Officers of Health. Few people are aware that, in almost all towns, infectious cases are immediately reported by the Medical Officer to the Public Library authorities ; and still fewer know that even after a book is certified as disinfected, scarcely any of the Public Libraries allow such a work to circulate again—it being destroyed and replaced by a new copy. The Newcastle Corporation spends about £10 per year in such renewal precautions, over and above the two or three hundred pounds spent annually in replacing worn out books. By how many subscription, club or private libraries can these precautions be claimed ? Yet there are many persons who through ignorance, fly from the ill which does not exist, to one which does. There is no necessity to re-circulate such books—even although certified as disinfected—for according to the Health Acts, the Local Sanitary Authority can be called upon to refund the cost of such discarded books, and several Library Committees now claim this compensation.

Fiction Stock and Fiction Issues.

Another point upon which the public need enlightening, is the difference between fiction issues and fiction stock and expenditure. Some people who have never used a good Public Library, conclude that because the percentage of fiction is in some Libraries abnormally high, the expenditure on fiction is in proportion to the issue, and that the Library is therefore not likely to contain the classes of books which they require. Such of course is not the case. The reading public would be much surprised if they knew the true state of things. To take the Newcastle Libraries as a sample of the large provincial Libraries ; fiction stands as follows : The annual issue of books of all classes is about 320,000 volumes, of which

fiction—including juvenile—is 55 per cent. The total stock of the Libraries is over 130,000 volumes, yet only 9 per cent. of it is fiction. Of the annual expenditure on books, only between 6 and 7 per cent. is on fiction. Whilst in most Libraries the percentage of fiction issued is higher than in Newcastle—the average in British Libraries being 71 per cent.—yet the proportion of fiction stock is generally about the same, and the average expenditure on this section is only about $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., although about 800 new novels are published yearly.

Some Librarians may take exception at this apparent apology for fiction; in fact the subject of fiction circulation is one which has been championed by Librarians of acknowledged standing. It is not to be denied that the reading of good fiction in moderation is a beneficial sedative, but like all sedatives, continual use is not beneficial and may become harmful. Although we are servants and not dictators to the public, much can and should be done to lead the public, even unconsciously, to reading of a more profitable character.

There is a hackneyed claim on this point regarding the piper and the tune, but really the position is clearly reversed. It is he who contributes most to the financial support of the Library, who uses it least; it is not unreasonable, however, if he waives his prerogative, that he may at the same time, be wishful to see profitable use made of his contribution. It scarcely needs pointing out that but for the large ratepayers, the selection of books offered to the general borrower—whose Library rate contribution averages from 2s. 6d. to 3s. 6d. per annum—would be very materially affected in number and in quality.

Everything possible should be done to bring before the different sections of a community, the more useful books possessed by the Library, which relate to each section; in order that the utmost possible benefits may be secured. By so extending the usefulness of our institutions, we shall, as Mr. Greenwood says, "be helping to equip our kinsmen against the struggle between the leading nations of the world. The process of evolution does not leave our Public Libraries alone, any more than it does other parts of our national life."

Separate hand lists of books relating to Architecture, Engineering, Ship-building, Education, Fine Arts, local subjects, and topics of the day, etc., should be circulated among the heads of the different factories and institutions concerned with each subject. Many persons do not give the Library credit for possessing books on technical or apparently out of the way subjects in which they may be interested, and such lists serve to call attention to these subjects as represented in the Library, in a much more effective manner than is even possible in the complete catalogue. Prominence given to the

lighter forms of non-fictional literature has a counteracting tendency upon excessive fiction reading, and even if not always culminating in serious study, nevertheless helps considerably to the better understanding of the realities of the world in which we live. When we consider that the average fiction issue in British Public Libraries is 71·5 per cent., can we really feel convinced that this was the primary object for which the promoters of the Public Libraries Act fought so hard? Can the Chiefs of the Libraries which issue large percentages of fiction—rising in a few cases to 85 and 90 per cent.—feel that their services to the public are of any serious importance or educational value? Is such a state of things likely to fire rising Librarians with enthusiasm for deep study, and convince them of the need for applying themselves to such subjects as : bibliography ; scientific classification ; literature ; languages, and Library administration generally?

As a prominent Librarian has said, in speaking of excessive fiction issues, "Large issues of unproductive fiction have a tendency to reflect on the Public Library movement and on Librarians, and to furnish people with arguments against supporting the movement." No Librarian can be said to be occupying his true place in the sphere of education, unless he does something to encourage the reading of non-fictional works. To follow the line of least resistance and justify the fiction weakness, is not true Librarianship.

Early Closing.

Among the many subjects which one might call attention to under this title, is one relating to the closing of Libraries for a weekly half-holiday. As the early closing day is now becoming general for shopkeepers, it becomes imperative that it should be abolished for Libraries. This may at first seem a strange suggestion from one engaged in Libraries, for already as matters stand, more consideration should be given to staff hours, which are, it is generally conceded, too long. There should not be any connection between staff hours and Library hours. Where Library Committees could grant an extra assistant or two to strengthen reliefs, longer open hours could be secured for the public, and at the same time shorter hours for the staff. Where such an arrangement cannot be made, the shopkeepers' half-holiday, should certainly not be the day selected for Library closing. There are many engaged in shops whose hours prevent their visiting the Library on any other day. Certainly such people would be better enjoying the fresh air on a half-holiday, but we all know that the "consistency" of the British climate affords many opportunities for mental culture. As most Reference Libraries and News-rooms are open all the week, the same should be arranged for Lending Libraries.

Sunday Opening of Reference Libraries.

Related to this subject, is the Sunday opening of Reference Libraries. It cannot but be admitted, after considering the evidence on the subject, that the universal opening of Reference Libraries after mid-day on a Sunday, would be of real benefit to many who long to become better acquainted with the rich mines of the world's literature, but whose occupations prevent such acquaintance during the working days. Many a self-made man has acknowledged his indebtedness to the assistance gained from Public Libraries, and many more would be assisted by this innovation. The subject has been discussed on religious and moral grounds, but the social and moral advantages out-weigh all the arguments brought against it. John Stuart Mill, in his work, "On Liberty," in speaking of this subject said, "Though the resistance to the opening of museums and the like has not the cruelty of the old persecutors, the state of mind indicated by it, is fundamentally the same." Further he adds: "It is true that the amusement of some is the day's work of others; but the useful recreation of many, is worth the labour of a few, provided the occupation is freely chosen, and can be freely resigned." Certainly assistants cannot be expected to have a hankering for Sunday duty under ordinary conditions, but this objection and any religious scruples, could be met by the employment of Jewish teachers or other educated Jews, as is done in a few places. Upon these men no great technical demands would be made, beyond a knowledge of books and their location. The important administrative work would be done by the trained staff, during the week. A Committee desirous of knowing what support the Sunday opening of their Library would receive, might easily secure it by laying out a roll for signatures of would-be users. In Birmingham the Reference Department has been for over 30 years open on Sundays, the hours being from 3.0 to 9.0 p.m. The books consulted average 1,000 volumes each Sunday; in Manchester over 3,000 volumes are consulted each Sunday; ten London Libraries open from 3.0 to 9.0 p.m.

A large number of the Reference Libraries in America are open on Sundays. The movement commenced there in Cincinnati in 1870 and has gone rapidly ahead, and be it noted, with a strong backing from the clergymen and moral leaders. It has long since passed from the stage of theory and now receives the support of many prominent Librarians. The late Dr. W. F. Pool, said, "For 20 years I have been in favour of Sunday opening." As far back as 1877 Dr. Justin Winsor, then Librarian of Boston, said, "People who were once tortured with the idea, now accept it, and the benefits of Sunday opening are acknowledged." As long as Public Parks, Public

Baths, Post-Offices, Railway Stations, Sunday School Libraries and many other institutions, are open on the Sabbath (to say nothing of the production of Monday's newspaper) why should valuable Reference Libraries not be open? Mental as well as physical development should be encouraged on that day, in those who have not the ordinary facilities during the week. Sunday lectures which elevate and educate, have no claims superior to Reference Libraries. More good work is to be got from opening the storehouses of learning, than from open Newsrooms, which at any time are doubtful in their benefits.

Newsrooms.

The true utility of Newsrooms, is a subject which has been receiving a good deal of attention of late from Library Committees, with a consequence that faith in these institutions appears to be on the wane. Observant and experienced Librarians are almost invariably of opinion that these institutions are not valuable acquisitions to the public, that they do not justify the expenditure usually made upon them, and that though in theory they may appear to be useful, in practice they are out and out failures. In the first place it is doubtful if it was intended by the promoters of the Public Libraries Acts, that the Act should include the creation of Newsrooms. They are mostly infested with loafers and betting men, who form a greasy and gruesome company, and who abuse the place in every conceivable manner. The Committee of a well known Public Library quite recently decided to close their Newsroom on Sundays, in order that it may be subjected to a weekly fumigation. The very man who would obtain what good may be procurable in the Newsroom, and who has the most right to use it, generally has a knowledge of the day's news, long before his labour permits him to visit the institution, but when perchance he can look in during the day, he is ousted by loafers. Should he be in search of a situation, or the important news of the day, he must seek the information elsewhere if it is to be secured with cleanliness, comfort, and respectability. The genuine "out-of-work" would be better served if the advertisement columns were shown on boards outside or near the door of the building, as is sometimes done.

To rid the Public Newsroom of the undesirables, is a difficulty which only a Librarian can thoroughly understand; for whilst he may turn out, or cause to be turned out, numerous decided cases in a day, there remain many who, judged by the average citizen, are far from desirable, but yet somehow manage to dodge and evade the rules of the institution. The system of blacking out horse-racing news, which is practised

in some towns, is one which is open to much criticism, for after all, horse-racing is only one of the many British sports upon which betting takes place. In addition, the practice is only indifferently successful, for where "blackening out" is practised the loafing still exists to a considerable extent.

Out of the thousands who use town newsrooms in a day, it is safe to say—concerning most of them—that not more than about 10 per cent. are genuine or desirable readers, and most of these are to be found in the evenings. This may appear a low estimate, but in some towns the searchlight of a modern Diogenes would fail to discover even this 10 per cent. Public Newsrooms seem to be universally understood as loafing grounds. There appeared in "Punch," some two or three years ago, a humorous account of a day's loafing in London. The writer concluded his description by saying that feeling tired in the afternoon he made his way to the nearest Public Newsroom, sought out a quiet corner and had a good sleep. It is sometimes claimed that if these men were not in the Newsroom, they would be in the Public House. Such is not so. It is more often because they cannot be in the Public House, that they are to be found in the Public Newsroom. The Newsroom loafer is not a convert from the Public House; he is there for a comfortable lounge and if possible a sleep.

To place Public Libraries as alternatives to the Public House, is to place them on a very low level indeed, and certainly to miss the spirit of the intention for which they were created. Public Libraries are not, and never were intended to be shelters for the idle. To say that reading in the Newsroom leads to reading in the Lending Library, is a statement which unfortunately is not borne out by fact. Rarely indeed does a regular Newsroom frequenter rise to the higher departments of reading through association with the Public Newsroom. He shows little or no ambition to do so, the excessive liberty of the yellow journal, offers something more to his taste. No man who has risen in the world can be claimed to have gained assistance or inspiration from the Newsroom. To have loafers continually about the Library, is to lower the worth of the institution in the estimation of those for whom it was intended, and to cause them to judge the Lending and Reference Libraries by the class of loafers who enter the building to use the Newsroom. In the same manner as men are judged by the company they keep, so are Libraries affected by the class of people seen about them. It may be admitted that suburban Newsrooms are not as a rule so much affected as those in the centre of a town, yet even in these the abuse exists to a certain degree. But even granting that Newsrooms may do some good, will any experienced Librarian deny that if the money, which is expended on them, and the

valuable room they take up, were used for Lending or Reference Library purposes, better results would be secured? In many cases these Newsrooms would make the admirable lecture halls which some Committees long to possess. Newsrooms are not needed in these days of cheap newspapers, nor can it be claimed that they are used to any extent by the genuine ratepayer. The Committee of the Hull Public Libraries has recently taken a step in the right direction, by deciding not to provide newspapers in future.

It has been stated that the Americans are behind us in Public Newsrooms, the number established being very small. Rather should it be said that they are ahead of us by being without them. America will do well if she never tries to "lick creation" by introducing such leprous white elephants. Until we can rid our valuable institutions of the objectionable fungus, which the average Newsroom fosters, we need never expect to draw the largest possible number of desirable readers to our Lending and Reference departments. The Committees who prefer to retain the Newsroom, ought if possible to place it in a building away from the Library; or failing that, a separate entrance should at least be provided.

Open Access.

It will be expected that some mention be made of "Open Access." It is however impossible and perhaps unnecessary to deal here with this big and already much discussed subject. Briefly the real opposition does not come from Librarians. Most are convinced that in theory "Open Access" is good, but unfortunately development in that direction is retarded by a small minority who disregard the laws of *meum et tuum*, therefore the many are debarred by the wrongdoing of the few.

Librarians and Salaries.

It has been contended by some Librarians that in many cases the remuneration received by the qualified man does not stimulate him to adopt, or work for the success of ideas which while extending the usefulness of the Library, will result in increasing his labour which in many cases is already inadequately remunerated. Though this reason is unfortunately true in very many instances, yet the spirit of such a contention must be regretted; it certainly is never to be found existing in the Librarian who is in this profession for the love of it. It must also be remembered that whilst Libraries have existed half a century, it is only during the latter half of that period that trained and qualified men have sprung up in sufficient numbers to administer Public Libraries in an efficient manner. It is therefore only recently that Library Committees have begun to recognise the necessity of paying

this trained and educated man at a higher rate than his predecessor—the broken schoolmaster, minister or journalist. At the same time Library Committees are not alone to be charged with lethargic recognition of services rendered; when we consider that the Library Association has not as yet seriously considered, from its own point of view, a standard of valuation for the Librarian's services. The size or income of his Library should found a ratio. Some such scale would certainly receive the consideration of Library Committees when considering a scale. The best and most careful attempt which has been made in the direction, is the suggested scale drawn out by Mr. J. D. Brown in his estimable "Manual of Library Economy." This scale, which is based on averages, is already receiving the attention of Committees. The following extract is taken from the section in Mr. Brown's work which deals with this subject:—

SCALE FOR CHIEF LIBRARIANS.

"It ought to be possible to fix a scale which would be fair to the Librarian and the institution over which he presides. A careful analysis of the income, population, work and salaries of the principal English and American Libraries has enabled the production of the following table, which shows clearly the amount which a Library can afford to pay for a good officer. This scale is considerably below the American one, but slightly higher than the English one up to Library incomes of £6,000. Above that sum the salaries suggested approach more to the American scale.

Income from Rate.	Salary.	Income from Rate.	Salary.
£	£	£	£
20,000	800	1,800	280
15,000	700	1,700	270
10,000	600	1,600	260
8,000	550	1,500	250
6,000	500	1,400	240
5,500	475	1,300	230
5,000	450	1,200	220
4,500	425	1,100	210
4,000	400	1,000	200
3,500	375	900	190
3,000	350	800	180
2,500	325	700	170
2,000	300	600	160
1,900	290	500	150

"By offering salaries according to the above scale, Library Committees will be able to attract the best officers obtainable for the grade of Library represented. They will also be freed from the maximum bogey, which is usually a very debatable policy wherever introduced. Very few officers who have once reached a maximum salary, especially when not very liberal, are likely to distinguish themselves by extra activity. An increase which proceeds from the growth of the Library resources, is paralleled in commercial life."

SUB-LIBRARIANS.

"Sub-Librarians receive from £50 to £175 per annum, and occasionally more in some of the large Libraries when long service is recognised. Generally we should say that a Sub-Librarian should receive half as much as the Chief Librarian of his own Library, although it may not be necessary to commence at such a high rate. It is certainly not fair that those holding the responsible position of Sub-Librarian should only get £90, £100, or £150, while the Chief Librarian is receiving £400 or £500."

ASSISTANTS.

"The difficulty of obtaining well educated boys of 15 and upward for Library work, is becoming more pronounced every year, especially where more remunerative work can be had. The appended scale for beginners and advanced assistants is based upon the salaries paid in several Libraries, and is one which can be worked by all Libraries with over £1,000 per annum:—

JUNIORS:	£26,	rising to	£46	16s.	by yearly increments of	£5	4s.
SENIORS:	£50,	"	£100	"	"	"	£10

Here we might say that a Librarian who is untrained is not likely to attain more than the poorest or the most commonplace results. Such men, to gain experience, are bound to experiment, and in so doing very often introduce impracticable systems which are a waste of public time, and money, as well as the patience of their readers. There is as much need for carefully trained and expert men in Public Library work, as there is in any other profession.

Many other points might be touched upon here, but limitations have allowed of the mention of only a few, which it is hoped may be found worthy of the consideration of those to whom they may come as new, or assist those who may have considered them but have hesitated in their adoption.

To say that it is of advantage to have variety in systems, is not true at the present day. To have said it thirty years ago might have been more reasonable, but when we remember that Public Libraries commenced to exist half a century back, is it too much to expect that at such a mature age, some plan for the future course should now be decided upon? The Library Association of the United Kingdom should use its great power for the consolidation of the many different systems, and thereby save incalculable time both to Librarians and to readers. That such can be done, cannot be disputed—in this we have a good illustration in the American Library methods and the administration of the English Education Act, which did not come into force until twenty years after the Public Libraries Act. Practical work of a high order of utility is now being done at the Annual Meetings of the Library Association, and it is only through such really useful meetings as that of last year—held at Leeds—that Libraries can be assisted to take their important share in the world's work. As "the worth of a State, is the worth of the individuals composing it," so will

the worth of Libraries to the State be largely influenced by the worth of the Librarians administering them.

Some consider that the Public Libraries service to the country has reached a point beyond which it cannot improve. Such an argument is based upon ignorance of facts, and is certainly not supported by those who look closely into the inner working of the system; there remains indeed much to be done before we have attained the ideal. Dr. Justin Winsor truly said, "We have raised expectations in the public mind, and we are bound to fulfil them."

The perfections of the American Libraries have been quoted frequently, and it cannot but be admitted that America is far ahead of us in Library administration. This admission was aptly expressed recently by the President of the Northern Counties Library Association, Mr. T. W. Hand, who in speaking of American Libraries, said, "What America in Library matters thinks to-day, England thinks to-morrow." This tardy development is not always due to the Librarians of England, it is often through limited funds, and occasionally by the action of non-progressive Committees. American Librarians frankly admit that English Librarians work hard and conscientiously, if not always in the right direction. Mr. Hodges, of Cincinnati, in reporting the result of a visit to England, last year, said, "Englishmen acknowledge that our American methods are worth copying. If there is any weakness of mental fibre in the Librarians of England, I failed to discover it; they impressed me as being fully as capable as American Librarians."

It is pleasing to acknowledge that a spirit of cordial enthusiasm exists between Librarians and Public bodies, and this it is to be hoped will assist to bring Libraries into line with the reading wants of the age. The Library must minister to the educational needs of the times; it must do more than hand the books to the reader, it must introduce the reader to the books, and stimulate the public to the reading of good works. To quote Channing, "The diffusion of books is to work greater effects than artillery, machinery and legislation. Its peaceful agency is to supersede stormy revolutions. The culture which it is to spread, whilst of unspeakable good to the individual, is also to become the stability of nations."

In bringing our systems into line, certain difficulties will doubtless arise, but if we follow the inspiring motto, "*Labor omnia vincit*," we shall in the end succeed in placing our Public Libraries where every true Librarian wishes to see them.

"It is never to be forgotten that ideals do exist; if they be not approximated to, the whole matter goes to wreck!"—Carlyle.

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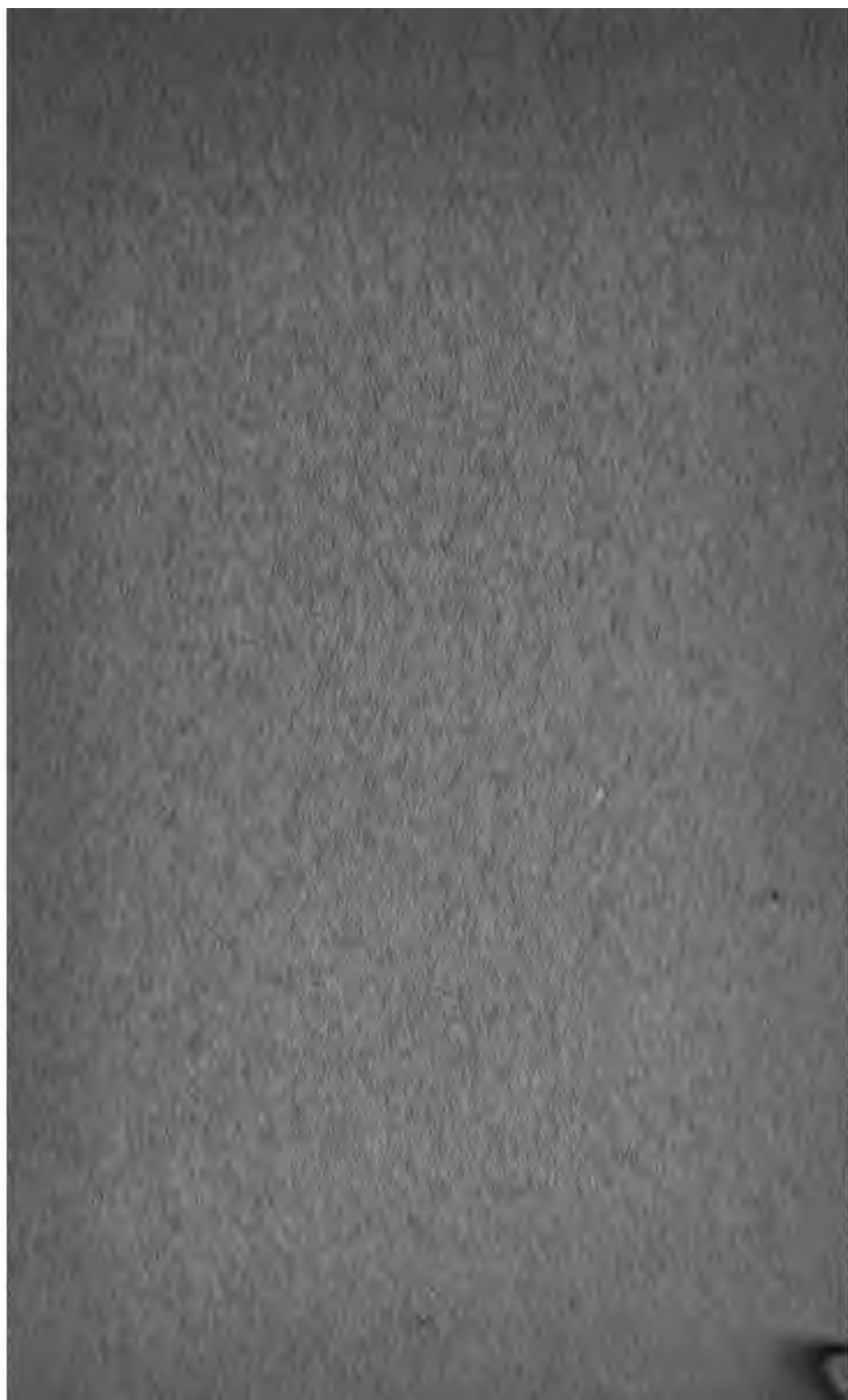
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